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Public Affairs

Corps Facts

Wahpeton, N.D., Flood Reduction Project

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Project Background

The 1997 flood in the Red River basin generated a strong determination by all levels of government to quickly identify, evaluate and implement permanent flood reduction projects for existing urban cities along the Red River of the North. The communities included the city of Wahpeton, N.D., and its sister city, Breckenridge, Minn.

The 1997 flood nearly devastated Wahpeton. Only heroic flood fighting kept the city from sustaining significant damages. As a result, there was strong public and interagency recognition that the city needed a permanent flood reduction project. In order for the federal government to become involved, a partnership was formed among the city, state and federal governments that combined and leveraged funding and expertise. This partnership became official on June 18, 1999, when the parties signed a feasibility cost sharing agreement. This partnership resulted in the formulation of a permanent project that is in the interest of the federal government and the city and led to the signing of a project cooperation agreement in June 2001.

Wahpeton is located in Richland County, approximately 55 miles south of Fargo, N.D. The Red River of the North and the Bois de Sioux River bound the city on the east. The confluence of the Ottertail River with the Red River of the North is located at Wahpeton. The city of Breckenridge lies across the Red River of the North and is concurrently working with the Corps of Engineers on its own flood control project.

Project Description

The Wahpeton flood control project consists of a permanent levee system to protect the city and a flood easement to keep breakout flood flows from being blocked in the future. Additionally, the project will include recreational features, such as multi-purpose trail systems and overlooks. The Wahpeton flood control project is estimated to cost \$13.8 million, with \$7 million the maximum level of federal participation. The state of North Dakota is assisting the city with construction of the flood control project.

Material acquisition for construction of the project began in the summer of 2002. The Corps awarded a construction contract for stage one in spring of 2003. Stage one included building pumping stations, ponding areas and related interior flood control features. Construction of this stage is complete.

Plans and specifications for stage two, which include building the in-town levee features for the levee reach from the airport to Center Street, are nearly complete. Construction is planned for the summer of 2007. However, in order to begin constructing the stage two levees at Wahpeton, the second stage of the Breckenridge project will also need to be under way.

Stage three of the Wahpeton project, which includes the remaining levees from Center Street to the golf course, is anticipated for completion in 2009. However, completion of stage three of the Wahpeton project is also tied to the Breckenridge project. Both projects will need to be completed together in order to prevent project-induced, levee-related damages to either community.

Authority

Section 205 of the 1948 Flood Control Act, as amended, authorizes construction of small projects for flood control and related purposes not specifically authorized by Congress. Projects recommended for construction must be economically justified and limited to a federal cost of \$7 million.